

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Republicans

FR: Eric Cantor

DT: Friday, September 06, 2013

RE: September and October Legislative Agenda

As we return from five weeks of meetings with constituents, small businesses, and local leaders, the House will be confronted with a number of serious issues ranging from federal spending levels to Syria, to Obamacare to domestic energy. In addition, we will continue to focus on America's working middle class as they lose ground when Washington wastes their tax dollars on out-of-control programs, Obamacare increases their insurance premiums and slashes their hours at work, and their energy prices rise.

We must, as always, remain focused on our conservative policies that can help grow the economy, lessen the burden of government and provide opportunity for working middle class families. Many families are distressed. Countless parents don't remember the last time their employer could afford to give them a raise. Many fear their full-time job will become a part-time job. And many don't have a job at all. And healthcare costs are rising.

Many of these middle class families feel squeezed out and don't feel the government is paying attention to their needs, and that their voices don't matter. Well their voices matter to us, and we're going to fight for them this month and every month after with an agenda focused on economic security and opportunity for working middle class families.

While this memo is not exhaustive of the issues the House will deal with in the fall, the outline below will give you a sense of what to expect over the next two months. I look forward to hearing your input in shaping our conservative agenda.

Appropriations

As the new fiscal year begins at the end of the month we find ourselves needing a short-term CR due to the Senate's failure to pass even a single appropriations bill. Enactment of a CR at sequester levels would contain \$64 billion in less spending compared to the current funding levels President Obama signed into law a mere five months ago. In signing a CR at sequester levels, the President would be endorsing a level of spending that wipes away all the increases he and Congressional Democrats made while they were in charge and returns us to a pre-2008 level of discretionary spending.

Debt Limit

The administration announced that it expects to run out of borrowing authority by mid-October. While we do not know the precise date of when that authority will lapse, the House will act to prevent a default on our obligations before that point. Over the past three decades during times of divided government, increases in the debt limit have been accompanied by major spending, fiscal, and regulatory reforms and I expect that model to play out once again. Gramm-Rudman, the Congressional Review Act, and the Budget Control Act all were enacted on previous increases of the debt limit. Therefore, House Republicans will demand fiscal reforms and pro-growth policies which put us on a path to balance in ten years in exchange for another increase in the debt limit.

Syria

Understanding that there are differing opinions on both sides of the aisle, it is up to President Obama to make the case to Congress and to the American people that this is the right course of action. Members should expect a robust debate and vote on an authorization of use of military force pertaining to Syria in the next two weeks.

Nutrition

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has ballooned since President Obama took office with one in seven Americans now receiving food stamps. As SNAP has grown, working middle class families are footing the \$80 billion bill for a safety net gone well beyond assistance to children, seniors, and the disabled. That is why, with Chairman Lucas, a working group of our conference came together to address the major problems to reform SNAP while still preserving the safety net for those who truly need it. The *Nutrition Reform and Work Opportunity Act* restores the intent of the bipartisan welfare reforms adopted in 1996 by ensuring that work requirements for able-bodied adults without children are enforced - not waived - and eliminates loopholes exploited over the last few years to avoid the program's income and asset tests. It also empowers states to engage able-bodied parents in work and job training as part of receiving food stamps to help move them to self-sufficiency. Most importantly, no individual who meets the income and asset guidelines of the SNAP program and is willing to comply with applicable work requirements will lose benefits as a result of these reforms. It is expected that these simple reforms will save taxpayers an estimated \$40 billion over ten years.

Obamacare

As the Speaker outlined in July, the House will hold a series of strategic votes throughout the fall to dismantle, defund, and delay Obamacare. The coalition supporting Obamacare cracks when forced to vote on the most unpopular aspects of the law. Remember, we have successfully forced the president to sign seven bills into law that either repeal parts of or significantly reduce spending on his signature law. And earlier this summer, 22 and 35 House Democrats voted to delay the individual and employee mandates, respectively.

We have seen in recent months that Obamacare is unworkable as the administration has missed half the deadlines in the law, according to a report published by CRS. Most recently, the administration has delayed the mandate on insurance companies that caps out-of-pocket insurance costs. As the October 1st implementation approaches, we will continue to pursue the strategy of systematically derailing this train wreck and replacing it with a patient-centered system which removes Washington from health care decisions.

Immigration

We know that the current legal immigration system is broken and should be fixed in a deliberate and responsible manner. That is why the Judiciary and Homeland Security committees have produced a number of specific bills which the House may begin considering this fall. Before we consider any other reforms, it is important that we pass legislation securing our borders and providing enforcement mechanisms to our law enforcement officials.

Domestic Energy

The working middle class is struggling under the weight of increased energy costs all while the United States has enough natural gas and newly discoverable oil finds to meet our energy needs for almost a century. We must focus on expanding our energy production in an environmentally friendly way to lower the price of energy for all Americans. That is why we will consider Bill Flores's bill, the *Protecting States' Rights to Promote American Energy Security Act* (H.R. 2728). This bipartisan legislation prohibits the Interior Department from enforcing federal hydraulic fracturing regulations in any state that already has existing regulations and recognizes states' rights to regulate this type of activity.

While energy is certainly a jobs issue, for millions of American families it is a pocketbook issue -- working middle class families who in 2001 spent 12% of their earnings to pay for their energy bills, today spend 21% of their income on the same bill. According to the research firm IHS Global Insight, shale energy production, which could not be done successfully without hydraulic fracturing, has created billions of dollars in additional revenues for federal, state and local governments, helped American consumers save an average of \$926 annually per household, and supported more than 1.75 million jobs in 2012. Throughout the fall, House Republicans will continue to bring environmentally friendly energy legislation like this to the floor to bring down the cost of energy, create jobs for the middle class, and make the United States more energy independent.

Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act

For over 100 years, the federal government has managed our national forests while sharing with impacted local communities a percentage of management revenue. Chairman Doc Hastings's bill, *Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act* (H.R. 1526), renews the government's commitment to rural communities, improves forest health, and will help prevent catastrophic wildfires which threaten millions of Americans through proactive measures. The bill also provides a short-term extension of the Secure Rural Schools payments program.

WRRDA

The Water Resource Reform and Development Act of 2013 (WRRDA) is model for a new way to do business here in Washington and I applaud Chairman Bill Shuster and his committee for developing a bill with much needed reforms. The legislation cuts federal red tape and bureaucracy, streamlines the project delivery process, improves competitiveness, strengthens water resources infrastructure, and promotes fiscal responsibility. Most importantly, WRRDA contains no earmarks. It also increases transparency, accountability and Congressional oversight in reviewing and prioritizing future water resources development activities without ceding Constitutional Congressional authority to the executive branch.

Kids First Research Act

H.R. 2019, *The Kids First Research Act*, introduced by Gregg Harper, Tom Cole, and Peter Welch clearly reflects Congressional priorities in funding: medical research before political parties and conventions. In the era of limited federal resources, it is critical that we set the right priorities and now more than ever our priority should be medical breakthroughs that help children who are suffering from diseases and disorders like autism, juvenile diabetes, Down syndrome, and cancer. This bipartisan bill eliminates the Presidential Election Campaign Fund and diverts the remaining money, approximately \$130 million, to

expand pediatric research at the National Institutes of Health. Autism Speaks, Children's Hospital Association, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society are among the more than three dozen groups which support passage of this bill. It is no secret that Healthcare costs coupled with our nation's demographic trends disproportionately cloud the fiscal outlook for the federal government. By promoting cures, this legislation also reflects a long term commitment to fiscal balance.

Oversight

In September and October, House committees will continue to hold an out-of-touch government in Washington accountable. Congressional oversight that exposes abuses, such as political targeting by the IRS, is the first step in restoring trust in government, controlling spending, and reforming Washington. Working middle class families deserve a government that is working for them, not against them.

As I detailed in a memo to you last month, House committees are actively pursuing over 150 inquiries. While the IRS and Benghazi investigations remain priorities, the committees continue to focus on wasteful spending, job-killing regulations including the implementation of Obamacare and the administration's energy policies, and national security.

Conclusion

This fall's legislative agenda is aimed at promoting our conservative solutions that produce results for all Americans. We will need to address additional issues this fall, including a review of our intelligence programs and cyber security. A variety of other items are likely to be considered and members will receive weekly schedule updates at our conference meetings. Upon return to Washington, if we stay focused on our solutions and how they can benefit all Americans dealing with their every day challenges, I am convinced we will achieve more significant policy victories in the months ahead.

Thank you for all the hard work you do on behalf of your constituents and all Americans.

Eric